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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 5948
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0195
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 000128

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS ON BURMA

REF: A. MANILA 0120
 [1](#)B. BANGKOK 0233
 [1](#)C. SINGAPORE 0081
 [1](#)D. JAKARTA 0098
 [1](#)E. KUALA LUMPUR 0070
 [1](#)F. USUN 0017
 [1](#)G. STATE 3591

Classified By: A/DCM Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo told the press on January 11 that the "advancement of democracy in Myanmar remains a key issue for ASEAN member countries." He noted that, at a working dinner, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers had "expressed concern on the pace of the national reconciliation process, and hope to see tangible progress that would lead to a peaceful transition to democracy in the near future." He added that the Philippines especially had called on Burma to free Aung San Suu Kyi and to make progress on its roadmap to democracy. He acknowledged that Burma had already released some political prisoners, but echoed the call of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for the release of "all political prisoners." ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong told the press that "the signal from Myanmar is that it does not want us to get involved."

[1](#)2. (C) According to Singapore DCM Desmond Ng, the Burmese Foreign Minister had pushed for a common ASEAN statement against the draft UN Security Council resolution introduced by the U.S. during the January 11 Foreign Ministers' working dinner. He said that the Singaporean Foreign Minister had insisted that ASEAN had no common position on Burma and should therefore not take a stance on the UNSCR. He added that the Thai Foreign Minister also expressed reluctance. Vietnamese DCM Ta Duy Chinh separately told A/DCM that Romulo's remarks did not reflect a common ASEAN position, and that Romulo was only speaking on behalf of the Philippines.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Romulo, who visited Aung San Suu Kyi in the mid-1990s when he was a Senator, remains highly concerned about her welfare in particular, while also hoping to see additional releases and progress toward democracy and respect for human rights in Burma. At the same time, as host of the ASEAN events in Cebu, the Philippines will want to maintain maximum goodwill and consensus among its fellow ASEAN members and not let any single issue disrupt the series of high level events.

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Jones